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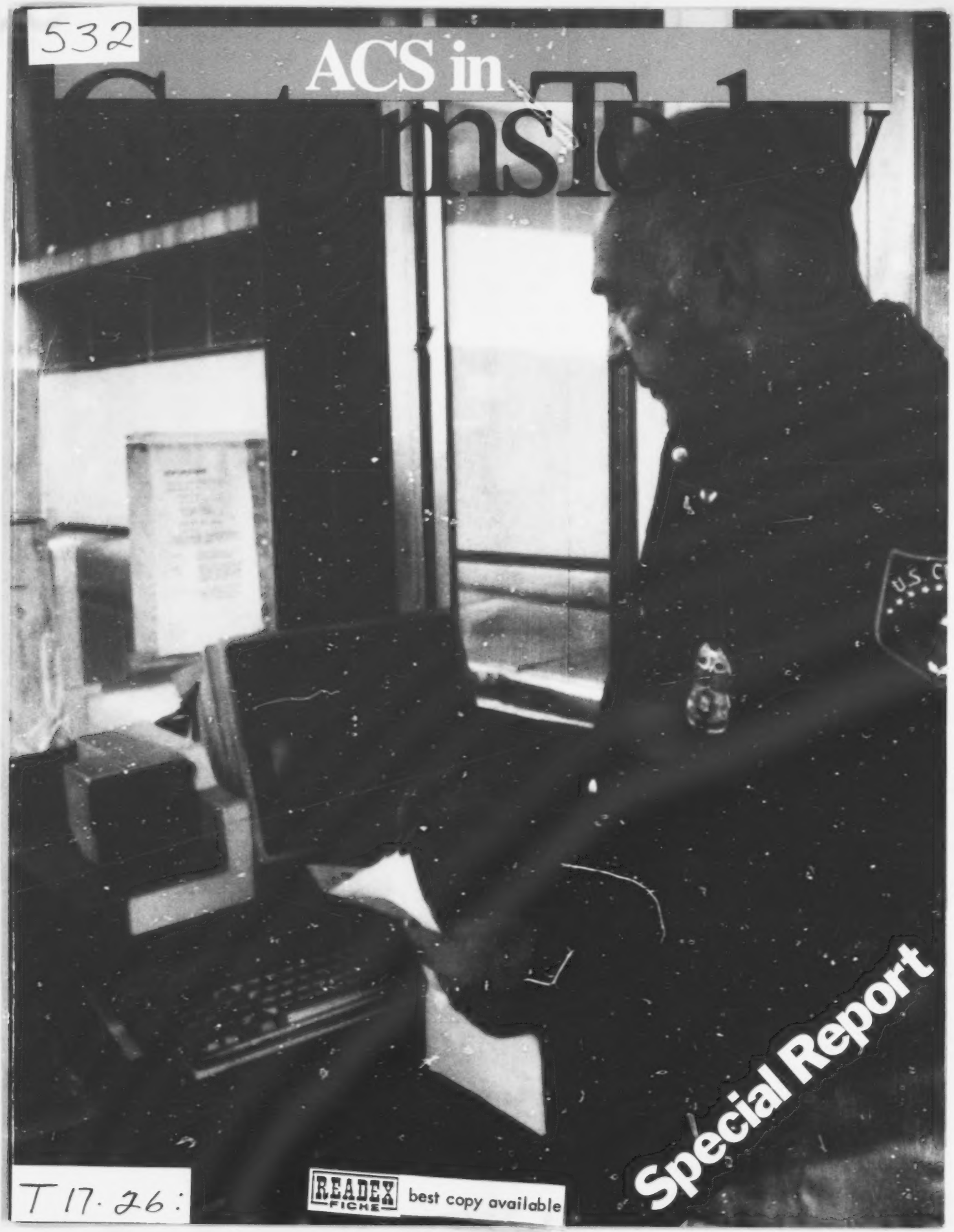
ACS in Customs Today



Special Report

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At his own ACS terminal, the Commissioner monitors paperless entry statistics.

This special report, *ACS in Customs Today*, is dedicated to the Automated Commercial System and to all of the men and women, both in government and in the private sector, who are using ACS to improve the professional quality of their service.

When I became Commissioner of Customs early in this decade, I committed this agency to developing an automated commercial system which would support our operations well into the 21st century.

It does not seem possible that ACS has only been operational since 1984. In fewer than five years, it has grown in scope and sophistication to such an extent as to affect virtually every segment of the international trade community.

One of the guiding principles of ACS during its development was the constant participation of both our field people and of representatives of the trade community.

This system was designed to be their tool—to be used by inspectors, import specialists, cashiers, entry control and enforcement personnel, customs brokers, importers, carriers, port authorities, service centers and other government agencies.

The basic tool is now in place. ACS effectiveness is attributable to their attention and support. We are all using it to improve our professional capabilities.

All of these disciplines are also being included in the development of additional capabilities and the enhancement of the system.

Earlier this year, we conducted a formal survey of the level of user satisfaction with the system. Overall, ACS received high marks.

But, there are some problem areas—and they are being addressed. For example, not everyone in Customs has access to an ACS terminal. Terminals are coming. Not everyone has had adequate training. Training is coming. Response times are sometimes too slow. More computer power and improved data communication are coming.

We must also insure that Customs' management goals are considered in the development and operation of ACS.

To accomplish this, we have established an ACS Steering Committee. This group of senior headquarters and regional managers is chaired by the Deputy Commissioner. Decision-making information for the committee is provided by a working group of program managers representing the numerous Customs functions.

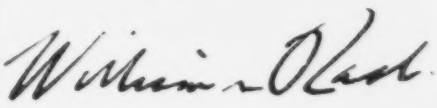
As ACS has become more valuable and useful to us, interest in improvements, enhancements and dependability have increased. Our interface partners in the trade and our Customs employees are more intensely involved in seeing to it that ACS meets their needs with greater effectiveness.

The involvement of our ACS users is vitally important to us. We are reaching out to all facets of the commercial trade, other agencies and all disciplines within Customs.

I look forward to the day when we are not only exchanging data with our domestic trade community, but with our neighbors in Canada and with our trading partners around the world.

By supporting the EDIFACT protocol, Customs is making a significant contribution to the acceptance of this international data communication standard.

Facilitating the exchange of data will ultimately lower the cost of imported goods and related services Coordinated international data exchange will also enhance our narcotics interdiction and enforcement posture.



William von Raab
Commissioner of Customs

Cover

At the Detroit and Canada Tunnel, Inspector Kearns "wands" bar-coded information into the ACS computer.

Department of the Treasury
U.S. Customs Service
October 1988

ACS in CustomsToday

Special Issue

2
A Broker's View of Automation
By Paul F. Wegener

4
ACS Today
By Robert W. Ehinger

6
What Moves ACS?
By Michael H. Lane

8
ABI from a Broker's Point
By A.E. Neto and Rachel Roser

9
Seattle is Powerless
By John Ogliore

10
"We Need More Training"
By Tom Bovasso

13
Hands-on Training
By Brian Burtnik

14
ESS
By Judy A. Schoeny

16
American President Lines
By Helen Hashimoto

18
Biggest and Fastest
By Glenn Samples

19
Selectivity
By Rick O'Connell

20
Criteria
By Mick Fulkerson

22
Setting the Record Straight on Line Release
By Carlton Brainard

22
Line Release
By Kim Santos

24
Operation Winternight
By James Wolford

25
JFK Trade Inspector Program
By Robert Bass

27
Maryland Port Authority
By Chris Hayes

Highly automated brokerages such as C.J. Tower Inc. have computerized as much as 95 percent of their classification work. Laura Piontek, terminal classification lead, uses a light pen to tell the computer what information she needs.

PHOTO CREDITS
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A Customs Broker's View of Automation

By Paul F. Wegener

While brokers and the Customs Service move towards full automation, many misconceptions have arisen and now persist: that brokers were bullied into automation by an "automate or perish" edict; that brokers found the "stubby pencil" method desirable and wanted to convince their customers that this was so; that Customs and brokers are ever at odds about ABI; and that conflict rather than cooperation is fundamental to our relationship.

Paul Wegener works for M.G. Maher and Company, Inc. as Vice President for Imports.

On behalf of the National Customs Brokers and Forwarders Association of America, Inc. (NCBFAA) and some 1,000 brokers nationally, let me say, once and for all, *that is not so!* Our partnership with Customs has brought us each great success and benefit. It's time that story was told.

First, a little history ... The Customs Service has wanted to automate for many years. Previous to 1978, Customs had only modest success in automating bonded sureties, developing a limited "in bond" system and maintaining a database on bonded carriers.

Overall, though, progress did not match expectations. (AMPS) was not working and Customs looked to the automation tools that brokers had employed in support of CF 7501 (entry summary).

So, in 1978 Customs persuaded NCBFAA to put its efforts behind the ABI program, securing an automated 7501 in exchange for a promise to brokers of faster cargo release.

The association cooperated, formed a committee [the ABI Committee] specifically designed to work with Customs on implementation, took a consultative and collegial role in ironing out the many wrinkles, and ... the rest is history.

Customs now processes 62 percent of its total entries through ABI. We forecast that this will eventually increase to 85 percent, almost exclusively through customs broker automated filings.

This has been enormously beneficial to our customers, the importers, in that it has greatly reduced the time frame in which to clear cargo. Key to this is Selectivity, which has eliminated the long delays previously experienced in having Customs review documentation in order to determine the type of examination that would be required.

Of importance to brokers are the more technical achievements of ABI, accomplishments which also translate into advantages for the importing public:

- ABI eliminated unnecessary data elements from the entry/entry summary—saving both computer and keypunch time.
- Edit features increased the accuracy of the entry and eliminated numerous time-consuming steps, starting with a reject and ending with a refiling of the entry.
- Brokers have access to a wide range of invaluable data, some of which are: bond information, liquidation status, foreign port files, Generalized System of Preferences (GSP) exceptions, foreign country file contents, region/port information and the TSUSA—Tariff Schedules of the United States Annotated—file.
- Every Friday, the customs broker receives the liquidation list electronically (now expanded to include the National Import Liquidation System—NILS). At the same time, liquidation time has dropped dramatically and now the majority of all entries are liquidated within six weeks.
- The introduction of the Daily Statement has eliminated the need for an individual check for each transaction, previously a time-consuming and needless exercise.
- ACS has brought much greater uniformity in the preparation of Customs documents. More often than not, forms are common to each port, data entry is standardized and filing procedures are the same. This is very important to brokers with offices in more than one port.

But this is only a start. We are committed to work with Customs on paperless entry, automated clearinghouse (ACH), automated invoice interface (AII) and EDIFACT. This last area is very exciting and promises to bring a standard to our international community that will greatly enhance the flow of cargo overseas.

At its 10-year mark, automation and ACS have made monumental steps forward. We have advanced the state-of-the-art in expediting international business and we are stretching towards a 21st century that will bear little resemblance to our past.

Brokers are meeting this challenge *with* Customs. So, if you hear someone say otherwise, please set them straight!

Paul F. Wegener is the President of the National Customs Brokers and Freight Forwarders Association of America.

Customhouse Broker Suzanne Smith (right) handles computer communications for M.G. Maher in New Orleans while Marie Virgets is the client representative for Sears, Roebuck.

ACS TODAY

By Robert W. Ehinger

When I was an inspector and when I worked with import specialists in Detroit during the 1960's, what I would have given to have had ACS!

Only those who have been in the trade community during the past 20 years watching imported merchandise hit record volumes year after year can fully appreciate the progress we have made in automating our commercial processing.

Customs doesn't manufacture imported merchandise. Service is our product, our only product. The handling and transferring of information accurately and quickly, in conformance with appropriate enforcement of import laws and regulations, is our business.

If ever there existed a process that lends itself to the use of automation, our business is it.

Behind the Success

I have been asked many times, "Why has ACS been successful, when other Customs attempts at automating its commercial processing have not?"

In my view, the three most important reasons are: 1) the vision of Commissioner von Raab and his constant commitment to the program; 2) the fact that this time around, Customs solicited ideas from the trade and listened to those ideas; and 3) the continuing contribution of ideas and just plain hard work by our Customs headquarters and field professionals.

No system is perfect. Certainly, we have had our share of downtime, slow response time, program "bugs" and less than perfect data. But on balance, I believe that together we have developed one of the most sophisticated and successful automated systems in government or the private sector.

ACS has enabled Customs to increase its average productivity by over 10 percent each year since the initial implementation in 1984.*

There is no single system user who can appreciate the scope and complexity of ACS. The maintenance of the hardware, software and documentation is a mammoth task.

The Office of Data Systems is to be congratulated on the outstanding professional work which has brought us this far.

There have been literally thousands of suggestions from our users for changes and improvements. Many of them have been done, but others remain to be programmed. But, keep your ideas coming. It's your system.

Modules

ACS has four basic modules, or functions; the Automated Broker Interface (ABI), which provides for the exchange of electronic entry and entry summary data with brokers and importers; the Automated Manifest System (AMS), which allows the exchange of electronic manifest data with carriers and port authorities; Selectivity, which automatically identifies high-risk shipments for intensive review by inspectors and import specialists; and last but not least, the Financial System, which controls and accounts for the $14 billion in payments collected by Customs each year.

Other important functions include quota processing, bond processing, in-bond, drawback, protest, fines, penalties and forfeitures and seized property control.

*The Automated Commercial System: Impact on Customs Commercial Operations, October 30, 1987 Department of the Treasury study for the Office of Management and Budget.

Considering that ACS is only in its fifth year of operation, the growth factor is astounding. There are now nearly 3,000 on-line Customs terminals in place, and some 800 trade community users communicating with the Customs Data Center.

Since January 1987, only a year and a half ago, the percentage of Customs' total entry summaries handled by ABI has increased from 28 percent to over 62 percent.

The number of operational brokers and importers has increased from 75 to 553.

The percentage of Customs' vessel bills of lading handled by AMS has increased from 15 percent to nearly 50 percent. Cargo Selectivity processing has expanded from 62 to 130 ports.

Line release, a specialized cargo selectivity system for northern and

R.T. Crowley represents Trans Freight Lines and heads the Vessel Manifest User Group.

southern border locations, was expanded to 35 locations and is now speeding release for nearly one million shipments annually.

Training

As one might expect, the task of training our users is a substantial challenge. Training is progressing on three fronts: at the Customs Academy in Glynco, Georgia; at the ACS Training Center in Leesburg, Virginia, and at numerous regional and local training centers nationwide.

ACS training is geared to the specific needs of our professional disciplines.

To work with our trade community, ACS field teams have been established in 17 cities for the purpose of marketing and supporting importers, brokers, carriers, port authorities, service centers and other system users.

While much has been accomplished, I see many challenges ahead of us. With entry and entry summary selectivity processing now operational, we will see a dramatic expansion of the electronic (paperless) entry and entry summary capability in the very near future.

Expansion of the electronic payment feature, completion of the antidumping, countervailing duty and Customs Information Exchange (CIE) modules and implementation and expansion of the air manifest system are imminent.

We will continue to emphasize expansion of our electronic interfaces with the trade community and other government agencies, while at the same time, adding new features and improving service to all of our users.

The Customs Service has changed dramatically in my career of more than 25 years, but at no time have we changed more rapidly than in the five years of development and implementation of ACS.

Yet, there is more change ahead. In my eyes, ACS is a key to professionalism—helping me do my job better—for the entire international trade community, including the U.S. Customs Service.

Robert W. Ehinger is the Director, Office of Automated Commercial System Operations.

Tipped off by ACS, Inspector Joseph Nuccio marked a shipment of plastic garbage bags for intensive examination. New Orleans inspectors dug into the cargo and found 10,000 pounds of marijuana. Displaying the booty are SCI Robert Galloway (standing), CI Larry McClay (left) and SI Patrick Bonin.

Bob Ehinger asks for the "consensus in the trade" on the unique bill of lading. To the right is Bill O'Donnell, Chief of the Manifest Design and Development Branch.

What Drives ACS?

By Michael H. Lane

What drives ACS? The Automated Commercial System (ACS) is driven by the importing community's need for information.

ACS has become the primary vehicle for the exchange of import information between Customs, the trade community and other government agencies. ACS moves this information to the place where it is needed quickly and accurately.

Use of ACS has made it possible for Customs to do an increasingly effective job in the face of rising levels of import activity and a relatively stable workforce.

The data resident in the ACS database is relieving our inspectors and import specialists of tedious clerical work, and enabling them to spend more time inspecting and analyzing problem shipments. Our enforcement professionals are using ACS data to detect fraud and contraband.

Other government agencies are also benefitting from ACS information. Through the Automated Broker Interface (ABI), Customs is electronically gathering, editing and transmitting the statistical information needed by the Bureau of the Census.

ACS selectivity criteria assist Customs officers in enforcing laws and regulations for other agencies such as the Department of Agriculture and the Food and Drug Administration.

Importers, customs brokers, carriers and port authorities participating in ACS are all benefitting by receiving ACS information electronically.

The more electronic capabilities that we develop, the more our ACS users demand. We are now moving into the second generation with more advanced tools, including enforcement screening, air manifest, antidumping/countervailing duty case tracking, Customs Information Exchange and some 65 other projects still to come.

We are not only receiving data from domestic sources, but from overseas, before cargo arrives. With international agreements on standard messages, worldwide data interchange becomes possible, facilitating the activity of both governments and commercial traders.

We soon will be sharing data with other customs services, so that one country's export data can be used as another's import data.

With ACS, Customs is an international leader in using technology to ensure accomplishment of its mission, add to the professionalism of our employees and improve the level of service provided to the public by the trade.

This is our challenge: to make maximum use of the tools already in place, and to keep up with the new developments and even newer technology.

Demonstrating Customs' commitment to ACS, Deputy Commissioner Mike Lane chairs the ACS Steering Committee.

Michael H. Lane is Deputy Commissioner of Customs and Chairman of the ACS Steering Committee.

ABI *from a Southwest Broker's Point of View*

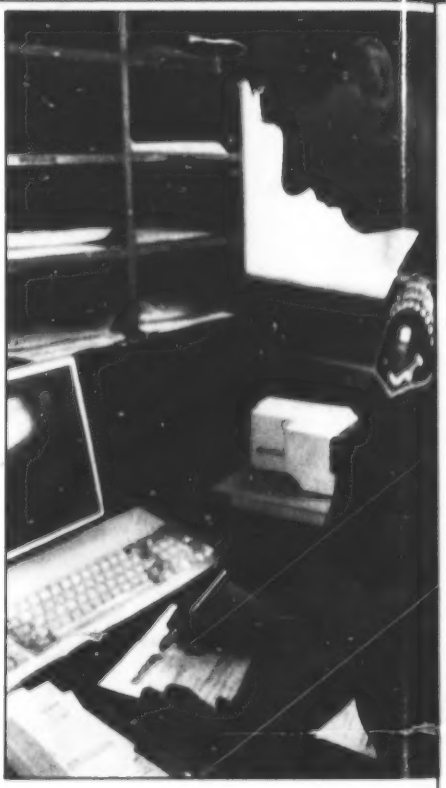
By A. E. Neto and Rachel Roser

When we opened our own business in 1986 we knew exactly which direction we wanted to go. Automation through ABI.

After 12 years in this business it was clear to us that the brokers in the Laredo District were unreceptive and basically unwilling to take a chance on the ABI/ACS program. It was obvious to us that in order to succeed in such a competitive market we had to be different, and different we were.

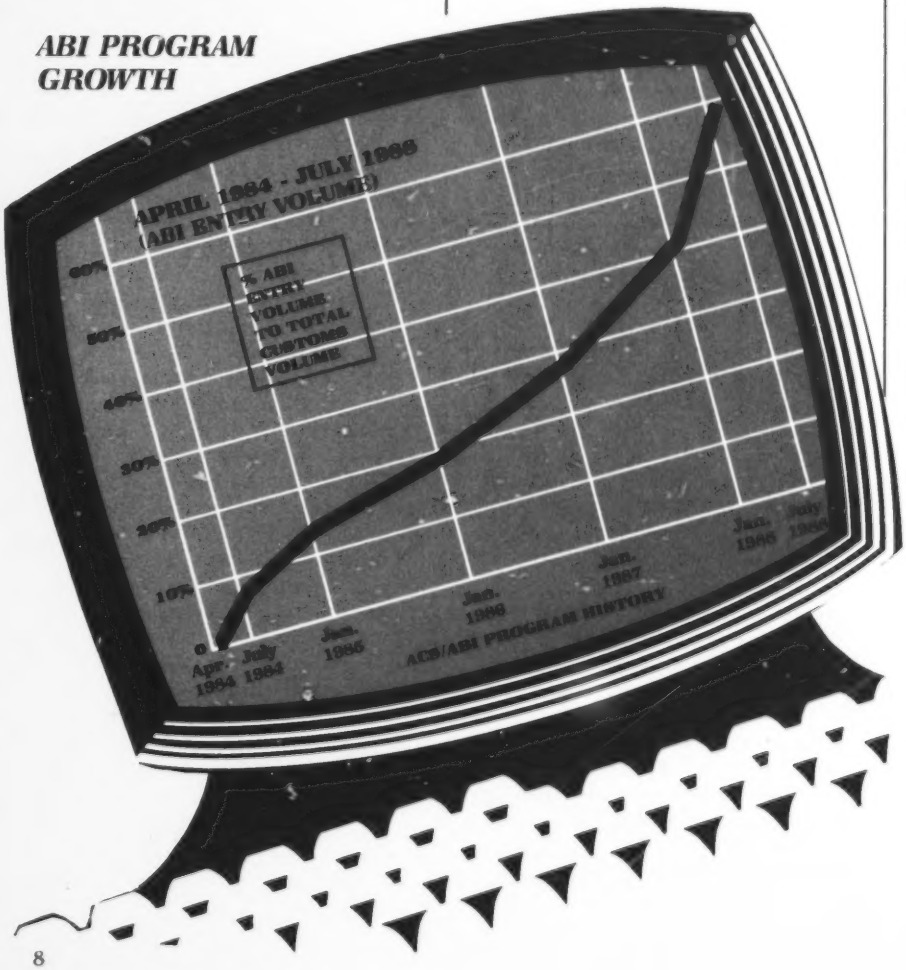
Roser & Associates was the first U.S. Customs broker in the Port of Brownsville, first in the District of Laredo and second along the entire Texas/Mexico border to be approved for operational participation in ABI.

The benefits of the program were immediately felt. Administrative messages that had previously taken weeks to filter down to the port level were coming through the system the day of issue. Our present and potential importers could be queried and input (CF-5106) into the system without burdening local Customs with additional work. Other advantages involved tariff updates, consumption entry transmissions and priority treatment at the International Bridge.



With line release, CI Bill Herman can clear a low-risk shipment by merely running a wand over the paperwork.

ABI PROGRAM GROWTH



Priority treatment became extremely obvious in dealing with live quota entries. We now had the capability to release quota shipments in minutes rather than hours.

The first of our clients to feel the quota impact were Mexican Industrial Apparel (Ocean Pacific Shirts) and Fisher Price Toys. Twin plant companies such as Northern Electric, Ranco Electronics, Teccor and Magnetek also benefitted from this treatment.

Needless to say, brokers in our area began to change their "opinion" of ABI. Participation became a necessity rather than a choice. The local Customs offices also began to profit in various degrees—mostly in the area of computer equipment for the implementation of ACS, including the Cargo Selectivity and Line Release programs.

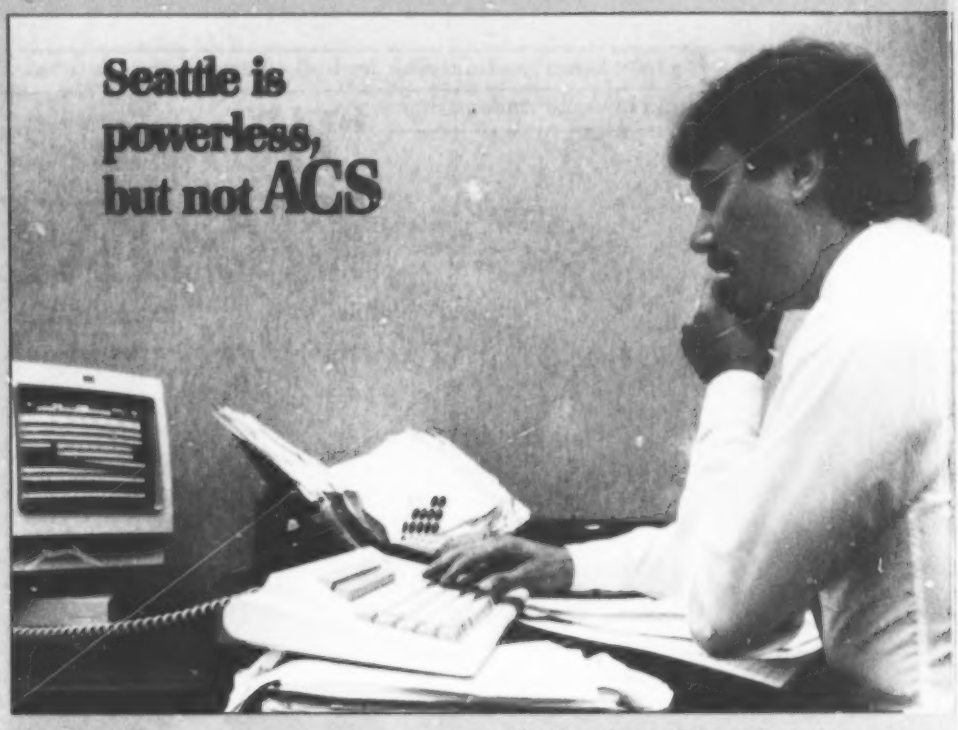
Out of 16 brokers in the Port of Brownsville, we are currently #3 in total entry volume. We sincerely believe that our automation and our participation in ABI and ACS has enabled us to carry out our job in a more efficient and a more professional manner.

The benefits are not only felt by us as a broker, but by our importers and by Customs in general.

Our philosophy has always been to work with Customs rather than against them. We look forward to participating in the future implementation of Paperless Entry (at land-border crossings) and expansion of the Line Release Program.

U.S. Customs Brokers A. E. Neto and Rachel Roser represent Roser & Associates of Brownsville, Texas.

Seattle is powerless, but not ACS



Classifier Ed Beck of M.G. Maher is using a powerful personal computer like the one that provided emergency service to the Seattle District.

By John Ogliore

On Wednesday, August 31, 1988 a tragedy struck the city of Seattle when a fire in a power substation caused a blackout in a 50-square-block area in the city's downtown core.

All shops and restaurants were forced to close. Hotels and apartment houses were without power for four days.

Downtown Seattle streets looked like a scene from the early 1900's with traffic policemen at every intersection directing automobile and pedestrian traffic with hand signals.

U.S. Customs in Seattle was affected by the blackout. Although our building was outside the stricken area, the phone lines for all Customs' processing equipment from Blaine to Portland were put out of service.

During this pre-Labor Day period there were many critical transactions that required processing. These included quota input, ABI statements, reports and ABI/AMS problem solving.

The Seattle ACS team came to the rescue by establishing a link to the Franconia Data Center through a portable lap-top computer, using a separate dedicated phone line.

Lois Fields, Seattle ACS supervisor, contacted ACS Security Administrator Peggy Versich to arrange to have the lap top configured as a processing terminal for entry and quota transactions.

The ACS team also arranged for the San Francisco ACS team to print the most important reports at their remote printer and send them to the blacked out locations via courier.

Users such as entry clerks, quota clerks and import specialists were able to input quota entries and order time-sensitive reports. The Import Specialist Enforcement Team (ISET) team was able to do a time-critical inquiry for a potential penalty. The ACS in Seattle could give uninterrupted service to their ABI and AMS clients.

We were very pleased to be able to offer this emergency service to the Seattle District and although we hope the need doesn't arise again, we will be there to help.

John Ogliore is an ACS specialist assigned to the Seattle ACS field team. He has been a Customs mail specialist, import specialist and an OAS analyst.

We have heard loud and clear from all quarters within Customs and from our trade partners, "We need more TRAINING in ACS."

By Tom Bovasso

You're going to get it just as fast as it can be delivered.

When ACS was a mere skeleton of its current self, many employees learned to use the system on their own or with the help of colleagues. This had the unfortunate effect of convincing management that an organized ACS training effort was not needed or if needed, could be postponed.

After all, considerable sums of money had been spent on the development and implementation of ACS. How could we go ask for more money, now, for training?

Well, ACS today is far too complicated and extensive to rely on such informal training methods. ACS has more than 2,800 applications, and 1,000 access codes to functions used by Customs personnel.

The need for formal training of Customs personnel at all levels and in various ways is very apparent.

In the ACS User-Satisfaction Survey conducted in March 1988, 64 percent of Customs' respondents said that they did not have enough training to make full use of ACS in their daily work, even though they had received some formal training.

Although 52 percent reported having received formal training, the top suggestion from employees was, "Give us more ACS training."

Productivity

The impact of ACS training on productivity among Customs employees is dramatic. About 25 percent of Customs' respondents reported a rise in productivity after 16 hours of training.

Entry Aide Ellen Berst might like to be the District Director of Buffalo someday. She's computer literate, a boost to most career goals as we head into the 21st century.

Productivity rose 20 to 60 percent in the last year for employees who reported productivity increases.

More than half of the employee respondents made suggestions for system improvement. The second most frequent category of suggestion revealed that the employee did not know that the suggested improvement was already available in the system—revealing the cost to Customs of inadequate training.

Three Fronts

Customs is now taking a three-front approach to ACS training. Basic and advanced ACS training will continue to be provided for the several Customs disciplines at the Customs Academy in Glynco. However, more time will be devoted to ACS instruction, particularly to hands-on training.

The Xerox Training Center will continue to train ACS trainers, ACS specialists, ACS coordinators, ACS security administrators and Customs' managers.

The establishment of ACS/Computer Training Centers has been authorized by headquarters. Centers are already operational in New York and Los Angeles, and will soon open in Miami, Chicago, Houston, New Orleans, JFK Airport and San Francisco. Altogether, Customs will conduct ACS training at 10 sites by the end of fiscal year 1989.

"What we have to address," reports Chief Liquidator Glenn Seale (Left) to ARCO Dave Banowetz of Customs' South Central Region, "is the computer literacy of our own employees. We owe them the training they need to do their jobs."

Contract employees such as Data Entry Operator Linda Wilson take some of the ACS entry burden off Customs employees in New Orleans.

More than 14,000 training sessions were conducted in fiscal year 1988 at Glynco, Xerox, New York and Los Angeles. That's a lot. But some sessions did little more than acquaint the employee with the existence of ACS. Some employees received as much as four weeks of training, while others received only four hours or none at all.

In fiscal 1989, we expect to conduct some 16,000 training sessions nationwide. But this time around the minimum will increase to 10 hours for the basics needed by all users, with more extended training for many types of employees.

In ACS training, we are playing catch-up ball. The payoff is so significant that we must get ahead very fast.

Tom Bovasso is the director of training for the Office of ACS Operations.

User-Satisfaction Survey Findings

Customs Employees *(1011 responses; 51 percent report regular daily use of ACS; 36 percent report productivity increases).*

- Productivity increases outweigh decreases by 5 to 1 for Customs employees.
- 41 percent of Customs employees reporting productivity increases report gains of 20 to 60 percent.
- ACS use rate and productivity gains highly correlated with ACS training, report Customs employees.
- Productivity gains attributed to faster access to data, increased familiarity with ACS, more training and more data available by Customs employees.
- Customs employees and trade respondents both demand more ACS training.
- Data storage and retrieval, entry status query and cargo selectivity history files top the list of most valued ACS features for Customs employees.
- Slow response time, downtime, equipment shortages/problems and inadequate ACS training top the list of ACS aggravations for Customs employees.
- 56 percent of Customs employees surveyed made specific suggestions for ACS improvement. Many have been adopted. Keep them coming.

Hands-on Training on ACS—One Region's Approach

By Brian Burtnik

The New York Region's ACS Task Force is composed of 16 men and women who have learned the intricacies of ACS to better instruct employees in our region in the application of ACS.

In coordination with headquarters and Glynco personnel, these ACS trainers were themselves trained during three weeks of hands-on instruction at the Xerox facility in Leesburg, Virginia, in the fall of 1987.

Along with technical aspects of ACS, the would-be instructors were schooled in the art of public speaking.

One week of Instructor Training given by the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) provided the basics for giving a good presentation, including the use of training aids, course material, eye contact and stage presence. Although some suffered with shaky knees, dry throats and white knuckles, members of the group delivered effective briefings to their colleagues.

By late 1987 we had our Instructor Task Force ready, but had no training facility and no students.

The Regional Commissioner of New York, Ed Kwas, and Anthony M. Liberta, Assistant Regional Commissioner for Operations, had taken a keen interest in this project from the very beginning.

After inspecting a room used to store office supplies and obsolete equipment, Liberta decided to transform the space into a regional computer training facility.

With support from the Regional Commissioner and many others, a conversion that might have taken six months or longer was accomplished in less than two months. From the facility we can give hands-on instruction to 16 employees at a time.

Anthony Liberta cuts the ribbon in a dedication for the training facility.

Students attending the New York Region's Enforcement Awareness Training Seminar now receive two days of hands-on ACS training at the computer training facility. The students are import specialists, inspectors, managers, agents, entry control personnel and other Customs employees who use ACS.

The philosophy behind the two-day ACS training session is to expose students to ACS through practical experience. At individual terminals sudents are able to process a commercial transaction through ACS using the demonstration port (8888). This allows realistic processing without affecting actual ACS operations.

Students are encouraged to explore some of over 1,000 function codes resident in ACS.

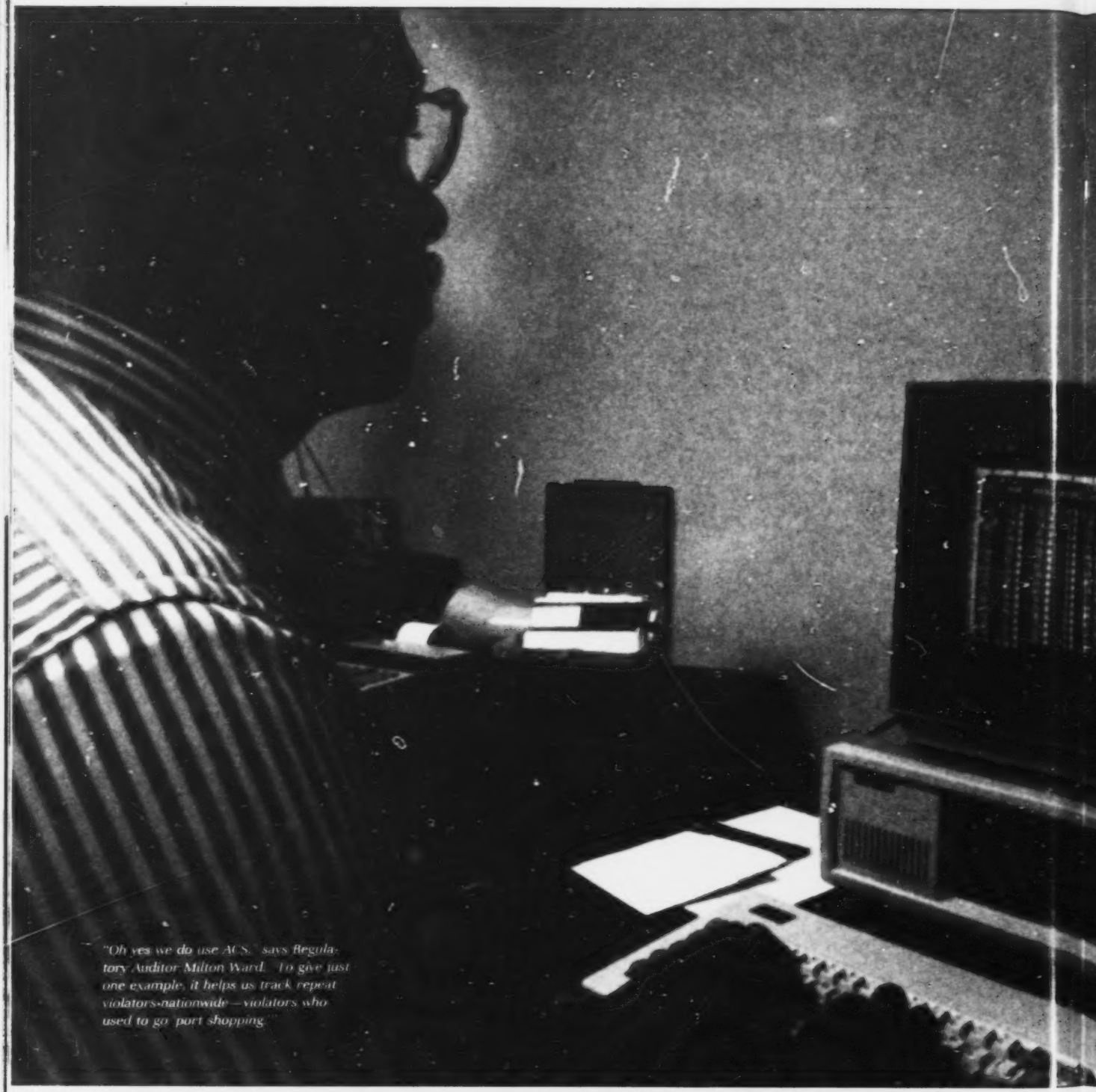
Providing a broad view of ACS to Customs employees lets them see how their job and the actions they perform in ACS relate to the Customs mission. We are continuously updating our instruction to accommodate new processing capabilities in ACS such as Entry Summary Selectivity, Paperless Release and Air Manifest.

The response to our classes, which have been given to more than 350 employees, has been very positive. Students appreciate the hands-on approach tremendously. In helps them overcome a basic fear of computers and lets them see first hand that an ACS terminal is a tool which assists them in doing their job and is not there to replace them. Comments from students include: ..."It opened my eyes and mind to the wonders of ACS." ... "Great class." ... "Training course offered excellent overview on ACS as it relates to the interaction among the various disciplines in Customs." ... "Hands-on approach is excellent—develops a sense of familiarity and confidence."

Brian Burtnik is a program officer in Commercial Operations and the Regional ACS coordinator.

Career Path: Art Lipp

Entire Customs career spent in Buffalo ... came aboard as an entry aide in 1970 ... became a mail technician in 1972 ... promoted to import specialist in 1974 ... advanced to fines, penalties and forfeitures (FP&F) officer in 1984.



"Oh yes we do use ACS," says Regulatory Auditor Milton Ward. "To give just one example, it helps us track repeat violators-nationwide – violators who used to go 'port shopping.'"

ESS
Entry Summary Selectivity

By Judy A. Schoeny

By the time this article is published, entry summary selectivity (ESS) will have been implemented nationwide.

ESS, in its first phase, is a way of automating the manual bypass system in effect in all locations processing entry summaries. Bypass in one form or another has been used for many years to separate low-risk summaries from those requiring review by import specialists. In an era where the workforce remained fairly stable, but the workload increased dramatically, bypass was one of the most effective ways to manage resources.

In the spring of 1987, ESS programming, which had been completed about two years prior, was resurrected. It was modified slightly, and was tested in the Seattle district beginning in August of that year. In September 1987, a panel of Customs personnel with various operational backgrounds, from both headquarters and field locations, met to evaluate the effectiveness of summary selectivity.

While the pilot was judged to be a success, several suggestions were proposed for modifications considered necessary prior to nationwide implementation. In fact, the pilot was so successful that Seattle elected to continue ESS processing.

Probably the most important thing to come out of the Seattle evaluation was the establishment of long-term goals and phases of ESS, which included automated bypass, development of a summary history file, laboratory and regulatory audit interfaces and eventually automated generation of criteria.

In December a decision was made to implement summary selectivity in additional locations (Blaine, Chicago, Cleveland, Dallas, Newark, New York, Philadelphia and Savannah). Programming on the most critical changes was pushed ahead of schedule, and ESS was implemented at those locations in April 1988.

Based on a positive evaluation conference held in June 1988, several locations elected to join the other areas already on ESS prior to scheduled nationwide implementation.

ESS, when first conceived, mimicked the programming for cargo selectivity. The criteria screens were virtually identical, and the logic the same, i.e. a criteria match meant team review, no match (or default) was bypass.

The Seattle evaluation team recommended changes to the ESS criteria data base which would allow selected merchandise to bypass (an automated override process), and recommended a separate enforcement criteria type which would override any proposed bypass. Another change to the criteria was the addition of value as an element of criteria.

Other recommended major changes included assigning batch and sequence numbers to bypassed summaries paid through statement processing, updating the first-time consignee file from summary input, and the generating of a report of bypassed entry summaries with open or discrepant findings.

The ESS criteria database consists of both national and local criteria. National criteria is created and maintained by the National Import Specialists. Local criteria, limited to 60 days with one 60-day extension, are created and maintained by local import specialists. The structuring of criteria in this manner should promote national uniformity in the area of automated bypass.

In addition to criteria matches causing team review, other reasons for team review include Census warnings, entry types other than 01, possible quota, line item values over $1 million, address alerts, first time consignees, discrepant findings and random reviews.

Presently, ESS processes on ABI entry summaries only. A pilot of the Data Reduction Center (DRC) is scheduled for this fall which will test, among other things, ESS processing on non-ABI entry summaries.

In summary, ESS is a new program which is being constantly modified and enhanced to best meet the needs of the import specialists.

Judy A. Schoeny heads the Summary Selectivity Branch in the Office of Automated Commercial Systems.

First Carrier to Test Master In-Bond Module American President Lines

By Helen Hashimoto

In a few short years, the Automated Commercial System has become an essential means of processing and clearing the large volume of imports entering the United States.

ACS and other systems have become particularly crucial for facilitating trade between Asia and the United States—the world's largest market for container transportation and American President Lines' principal service area.

The growth of the trans-Pacific market has indeed been remarkable. From 1982 to 1987, containerized imports from Asia grew 17 percent annually. While this rate could not be sustained indefinitely and growth has slowed, any increase in so large a trade lane represents significant volumes of cargo.

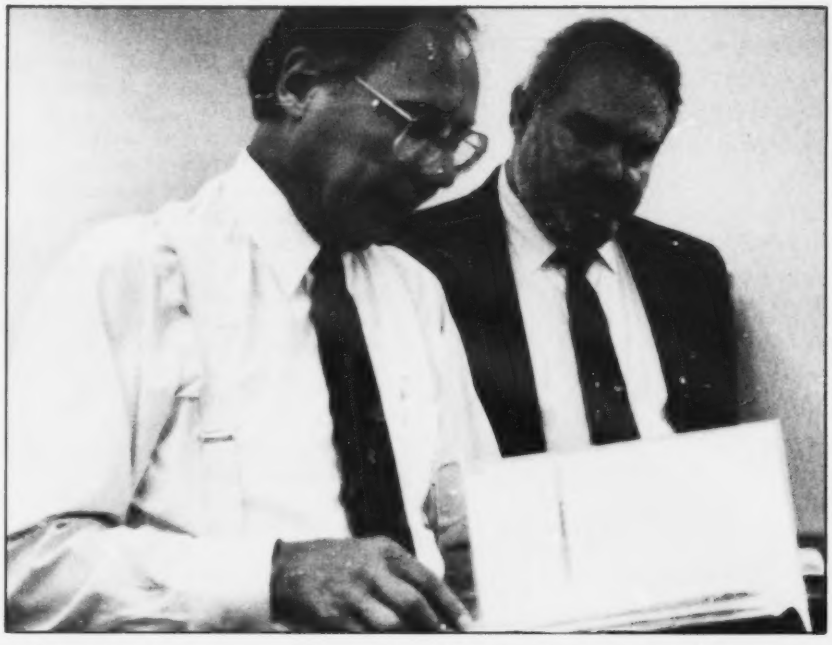
Automation systems today are enabling APL and other carriers to cope with these heavy volumes and at the same time keep service levels high.

As trade continues to expand in the future, automation will become even more important for processing the ever-increasing numbers of bills of lading, arrival notices, customs entry forms and other documents, and to satisfy the service expectations of customers.

Currently, American President Lines uses the Automated Manifest System (AMS) of ACS to help process imports at its three West Coast ports of call: Seattle, Oakland (California) and Los Angeles (San Pedro).

The Oakland-based carrier is also currently participating in a pilot test of the new Master In-Bond Module of AMS. This module significantly expedites the review and clearance of intermodal shipments from Asia to the Midwest and Atlantic regions of the United States.

More than 75 percent of all containerized imports from Asia to the U.S. Eastern Seaboard are handled via the West Coast, using a combination of ocean and rail service. This new in-bond system helps ensure that these shipments are quickly and efficiently cleared by Customs.



Paul Wegener (left) comments on Walter Vaughn's observation that ABI use surged shortly after Customs started using ACS client representatives.

The system is initially being used for shipments discharged at APL's San Pedro, Oakland and Seattle port facilities for release by Customs at APL's terminal in South Kearny, New Jersey. APL anticipates the expansion of the system to other locations in its U.S. network upon successful completion of the pilot phase.

American President Lines has a long history of working closely with Customs in the agency's automation efforts. In 1978, APL cooperated with Customs in the development of the initial Master In-Bond program, which enabled all carriers to manage intermodal shipments more efficiently.

From 1980 until the development of AMS, Customs inspectors used APL's own on-line cargo delivery system to electronically process cargo arriving aboard APL vessels. APL worked closely with Customs in the development of the "paired ports" program, which is allowing Customs officials to prescreen intermodal shipments from Asia while they are is still at sea.

Most recently, APL was the first carrier to participate in the pilot test of the Master In-Bond Module. The company also participated in the recent cooperative industry-Customs effort to establish a unique bill-of-lading numbering system.

Further, APL is actively supporting one-stop quota processing, which is significantly reducing the average time it takes to clear quota shipments.

Both the Customs Service and industry should be commended for the advances that have taken place so far and for the work and cooperation that brought them about.

User-Satisfaction Survey Findings

Ocean Carriers *(26 responses; 46 percent on AMS; of non-AMS respondents, 80 percent plan to be so, soon).*

- Carriers anticipate reduced document preparation cost, faster cargo release (increased throughput) and better information for accountability as top benefits with AMS.
- 69 percent of AMS carriers report AMS participation to be a marketing advantage.

Yet, as important as automation is, APL believes both industry and government need to look beyond technological solutions and examine the process of trade documentation itself.

According to Gary Taylor, director of information strategy and development for American President Company (APL's parent), this latter point is so basic that many in the industry often overlook it, and tend to overemphasize the role of technology alone in improving productivity.

The procedures that lead to the paperwork requirements must be closely examined to eliminate duplication and unnecessary documents, Taylor stresses.

"There have been dramatic advancements in our ability to compile and transmit information electronically in the past two decades," Taylor says. "What is needed now is a wholesale examination of the process that underlies the paperwork."

APL recommends a five-step approach to changing the process underlying trade documentation.

The five steps are as follows:

1. Target the unnecessary or redundant document and procedures.

2. Work to change the regulations that are perpetuating the existing process.

3. Ensure that the organizational structure of government agencies can accommodate any proposed changes in documentation.

4. Support the funding and development of government information systems that facilitate the proposed changes.

5. When appropriate, present the new electronic systems or procedures to our trading partners, to stimulate overseas government and private-sector support for multinational standards. This should be an ongoing activity throughout this multistep process, to ensure that U.S. innovations in paperwork reduction are compatible with the regulations or innovations of other countries, and vice versa. Obviously, no one country can successfully change the documentation process in a vacuum.

These recommendations have been adopted as a core strategy by the International Trade Facilitation Council, or NCITD as it has traditionally been known.

APL looks forward to working with representatives from Customs and other agencies to help implement this strategy.

Helen Hashimoto is the Manager of Documentation systemwide for the American President Lines.

Carrier representatives listen to debate on the unique bill of lading.

Biggest & Fastest of its Kind

By Glenn Samples

The computer system behind ACS handles two million on-line transactions, 8,000 batch jobs and 200 million database requests on a daily basis.

This volume of data and activity makes Customs' computer system the largest of its kind in the world. It is also the fastest.

System availability is the top priority of the Operations Division of the Office of Data Systems. It's our job to ensure that the computer systems are available to fulfill the requirements of the user 24 hours per day, every day.

As the complexity and size of the Customs data processing environment continues to expand, the task of ensuring complete availability to the users becomes increasingly complicated. More than ever before, the role of data processing is at the heart of the Customs mission.

A major key to system availability is the data base management system (DBMS), controlled by the software which provides application programs with access to data residing in the data base.

For example, there is a production DBMS which supports in total the Automated Commercial System (ACS). Within it, there are various groupings of programs and database information that support specific functional capabilities within ACS. One of these groupings supports Selectivity processing, another underlies the Automated Broker Interface (ABI).

Hard at work in the Buffalo computer room of C.J. Tower are Technical Support Consultant Dan Johnson and Data Preparation Clerk Pauline Wojtaszek-Evans.

As the need for sharing information between Customs' functional areas increases, so does the requirement that more and more data be available for longer periods of time to the user community.

It has become necessary to consider a relatively new aspect of software technology known as distributed data base management—meaning more than one DBMS can communicate and share data.

For example, within Customs, the delineation of regions, districts and ports is fundamental to all systems. In a nondistributed environment, each production DBMS would maintain separate copies of region, district and port data.

With a distributed data base, it is possible to maintain a single copy of region, district and port information which is then shared by all processing environments. Requirements for storage space are reduced and data integrity is improved.

With database sharing, all Customs users view exactly the same information.

Today, the Customs Data Center serves a network of 10,000 devices, including terminals, personal computers and remote job entry stations (brokers, carriers, importers, port authorities, service centers). Some 2,000 people use the system every day.

The ACS database is currently 160 million records and growing. The Entry History table alone has 36 million records and adds records equal to the number of entry transactions concluded each day (about 600,000 transactions and 4,500 batch jobs daily).

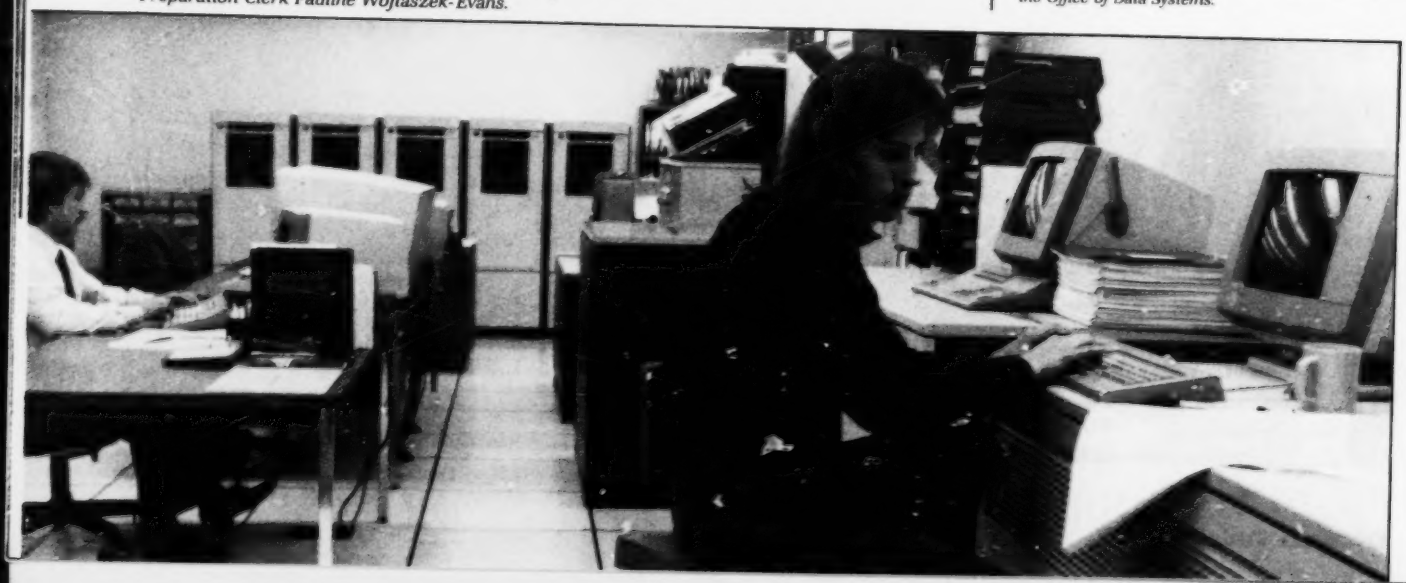
We have four years' worth of import data available for Customs use, today. Soon we will have seven years of transaction history available for use, increasing the size of the ACS database to 250 million records.

"The requirement for fast response is critical," says Gary Cantrell, who, as Director of Operations oversees Customs Data Centers. "With a combined total (from all systems) of 350 million database records, over 1.5 million transactions a day and a network of over 10,000 devices, it is vital that the our system tools deliver very high performance reliability and ease of use."

The past five years at Customs have certainly shown what a determined organization can accomplish with the right combination of no-nonsense management and advanced software.

We are ready for the future and will support not only growth but professionally reliable service.

Glenn Samples heads up the Data Base Branch of the Office of Data Systems.



Realizing ACS Potential with Selectivity

By Rick O'Connell

In my Customs career I have worked as an inspector, import specialist and analyst. The differences in the jobs are obvious, if overemphasized; yet the strongest feeling in each job was a desire to gain access to greater sources of information.

Whatever your job, you felt there was existing information, that could help you with your work, that was just out of reach due to problems of access or dissemination.

You wished there were a way to gain relevant data from all Customs units and other government agencies both locally and nationally.

When you developed significant enforcement information you wanted to be sure that your work would be directed to the units and locations where it would have the greatest positive impact.

ACS is currently giving Customs employees the opportunity to realize their hopes for an increase of accessible, vital information. The results can be seen in higher seizure statistics.

The ACS Selectivity (alert) database depends on and complements the professionalism of Customs employees because of the active nature of the file. Alerts are continually reviewed for accuracy and effectiveness, requiring much interaction between personnel and the system.

Within the last few months, a Chicago CET team has seized 2,743 pounds of hashish, based on national selectivity criteria focused on shipper and consignee. An additional 2,400 pounds of hashish was seized in Los Angeles based on the shipper match from the same criterion, shortly thereafter.

In addition to the alert information contained in Selectivity, ACS increases the effectiveness of each Customs employee by providing a vast historical database.

Through use of this database inspectors, import specialists, agents and analysts can focus their research and refine their targeting of suspects. Information from the input of millions of transactions is at their disposal.

Making full use of ACS, no seizure or violation exists in a vacuum. Each positive enforcement action can be analyzed, related targets can be identified, and examinations can be limited to those most likely to yield further positive results.

Customs has sought to increase the sources of information available to users of ACS. Most importantly, through presentations, personnel from other agencies have been informed of the capabilities of the system. The response has been enthusiastic and a number of these agencies have contributed valuable information to the database.

The recent increases in narcotics and commercial fraud seizures occurring simultaneously with initiatives to expedite low-risk cargo have shown that the facilitation of certain cargo is not inconsistent with a strong enforcement policy.

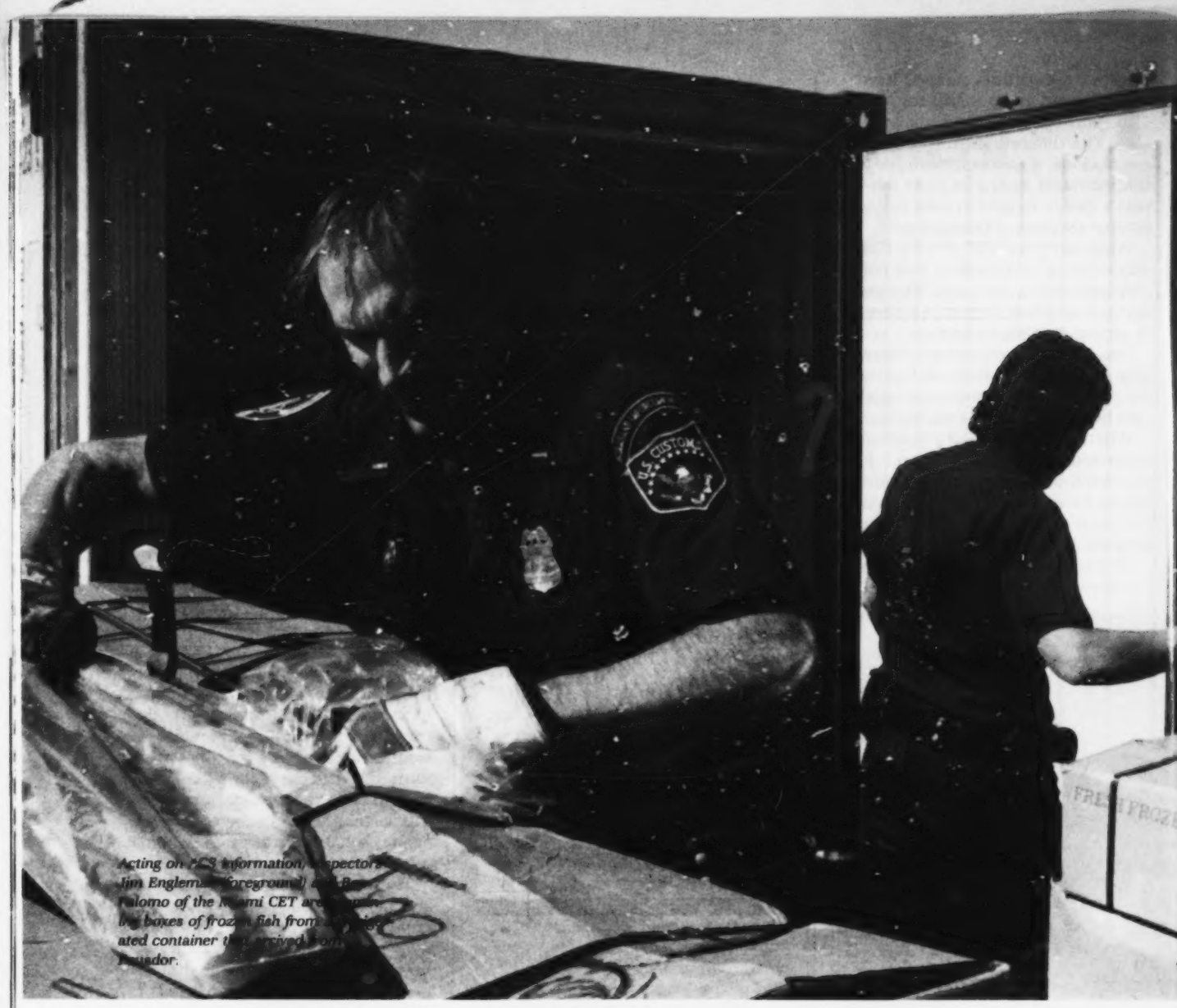
Customs automated programs have created an environment where international commerce is expedited, uniformity is improved and Customs professionals have the opportunity to perform thorough enforcement examinations on well-researched targets.

The next time you find yourself needing some extra information, go to your nearest ACS terminal. The kind of information you always felt existed and could never quite locate probably awaits you in the system.

Career Path: Cynthia Dupre

Signed on as a Customs aide in New Orleans in 1974 . . . promoted to supervisory Customs aide in 1979 . . . named supervisory entry control officer in 1987 . . . appointed ACS specialist in 1988.

Rick O'Connell is the director of the National Operational Analysis Staff (OAS) Center in the New York Region. Previously, he worked in the region as an inspector, import specialist and OAS analyst.



Acting on ACS information, inspectors Jim Englema[illegible] (foreground) and R[illegible] Palomo of the Miami CET are [illegible] big boxes of frozen fish from [illegible] ated container that arrived from Ecuador.

YOUR Criteria Are OUR Criteria

By Mick Fulkerson

We are all skeptical of change, and wonder how it will affect our jobs. ACS has had a very positive effect on my career and on the capability of the Customs Service.

Does ACS increase professionalism within the Customs Service?

You bet it does—and with a positive impact never previously felt within the Customs Service.

It enhances our ability to receive, process and retrieve data of interest to all types of Customs officers and has actually created new job categories which take advantage of the new technology such as the trade inspector, OAS analyst, ACS specialists, ACS trainers and others.

I began my ACS experience with old ACCEPT—Automated Cargo Clearance & Enforcement Processing Techniques—in 1984 in Miami, have lived through Selectivity Tiers I & II, spent two years with OAS and am now an ACS client representative serving trade clients from Charlotte, North Carolina.

During these last four years I have moaned with my peers as each "new" enhancement came on line. It has now become clear to me that with each development, ACS has given us more and better tools with which to do our jobs, and do them in a more professional and knowledgeable manner.

ACS allows us to manage the multifaceted operations of our various divisions. Each day brings an adventure in learning with some new capability to improve my work. I am reminded how intricate Customs processes have become, how many are involved, how voluminous the data. Without the automation of ACS we could not maintain control without totally losing the bubble.

OAS maintains Cargo Selectivity criteria, the system that taps all importation history and targets which transactions, among the millions, are most sensitive and deserve the most attention.

This system is based on the premise of coordination among all Customs disciplines in sharing our knowledge with each other, locally, nationally and among professions.

The focus of that effort is to facilitate legitimate cargo entering our country, stopping attempts at fraud, narcotics smuggling, entrance of illegal cargo, while protecting the public and the revenue.

Without the coordinated support of inspectors, import specialists, FP&F officers, agents, analysts and managers, criteria will not reflect field knowledge nor will it encourage field support. I feel that the mission of OAS will not succeed without such support.

In OAS units with a narcotics threat, the burden is generally split between narcotics and commercial fraud. Criteria input is solicited from the employees who normally work in these areas (inspectors and special agents for narcotics; import specialists and FP&F for fraud). There is a direct correlation between the input provided by the field in these areas and the success of local programs.

Local program success is also highly influenced by how District Directors interpret the role of OAS and if they feel that these units are to be dedicated to field support and research, as opposed to being viewed as administrative units assigned projects which distract them from their primary mission.

This West Coast broker inputs entry data to Cargo Selectivity through ACS. The system will decide if this shipment qualifies for paperless release.

Local research, experience and stimulation of effort are most easily effected at the local level. An excellent example is the optimum group effort in narcotics interdiction in the Southeast Region.

Narcotics intelligence received from the Massachusetts State Police prompted Boston CET and OAS personnel to create selectivity criteria based on importer number, name and possible addresses. This criteria hit netted 180 pounds of heroin last month.

The cocaine seizure record was broken in West Palm Beach in October 1986 with approximately 6,900 pounds, broken again in November 1987 with 8,300 pounds in Port Everglades and again in St. Petersburg with 9,200 pounds in April 1988.

Full credit for all these seizures goes to CET at these locations. Locally created criteria in ACS played a significant role in these successes.

The initial seizure was a direct result of local criteria and a positive hit. The 8,300 pound hit resulted from both local and national criteria. The St. Petersburg seizure resulted from criteria in Tampa and the Tampa CET working with various OAS and other agencies in trying to track the shipment.

I think that development of local criteria in narcotics and commercial fraud will continue to be successful just as long as there is cooperation in the field. Units such as CET feed information to OAS, which conducts research to determine criteria feasibility without creating an unreasonable workload burden. The referring party's opinion on the significance of the information carries great weight.

Duration of criteria is reviewed in light of the frequency of hits. The criteria database is refined and updated, as appropriate.

The bottom line is that ACS is an unparalleled success for Customs and it will continue to be as long as we work together.

Customs needs a "team player" attitude in all locations and divisions. We are too professionally interdependent to give less than complete cooperation among the service components. ACS helps you, and your colleagues need your help through ACS.

Mick Fulkerson is Customs' ACS client representative in Charlotte, North Carolina.

Buffalo sets the record straight – Origins o

Time is money to the truckdrivers crossing the Peace Bridge and CI David Popovich moves fast without short-changing the revenue.

By Carlton Brainard

It was in late 1984 that we recognized we had a tremendous amount of congestion at the bridges in the Buffalo District. And so we set out to do something about it.

"Didn't you and I spend a couple of cold winter days getting this thing off the ground?" Tom Anastasi asked after he'd read the article on line release in the summer 1988 issue of *Customs Today*. (Tom's the Vice President for Customer and Technical Services at the Customs brokerage C.J. Tower Inc.).

So we did. Members of my staff and a group of people in the trade gathered in my office and we worked diligently on a program that identified high-volume, low-

Line Release — A system for TODAY, emblematic of TOMORROW!

By Kim Santos

Along the Northern and Southern borders of the United States, the term line release is rapidly becoming part of business lexicon for those involved in international commerce.

The line release system, with its ubiquitous bar-code label, has had a fundamental impact on methods of processing commercial importations. The changes are apparent to all parties of the import transaction: the shipper, importer, broker, carrier and of course the Customs inspector.

The line release system uses familiar technology in an application unprecedented for the U.S. Customs Service: the expedited clearance of imported cargo through the use of bar code technology and microcomputers (PC's).

The bar-code labels, printed to Customs' specifications, identify the parties in interest (broker, shipper, importer) and the commodity.

The microcomputer supports the related database and serves as the link to the Customs mainframe computer in Virginia.

Line release is bringing many benefits to both the importing community and the Customs Service. Most visibly, the clearance of commercial traffic is expedited thus reducing arterial congestion.

Historically, backups of commercial truck traffic exceeded 20 miles nearly every day at some POE's prior to the introduction of line release.

It has been stated that 90 percent of Canada's population lives within 100 miles of the U.S. border, thus one could extrapolate that 90 percent of Canadian manufacturing of finished products is also within that geography.

Hence the repetitive nature of the daily flow of high-volume, low-risk cargo across the northern border and the necessity to accomplish the task of Customs entry and clearance as expeditiously as possible, without compromising the Customs mission of revenue protection and enforcement. Line release has accomplished this task.

Kim Santos works on cargo control systems as a program manager with the Office of Automated Commercial System Operations.

f Line Release

risk, repetitive shipments that could be released at the first point of contact.

The program would be the tool to allow Customs to concentrate its efforts on those shipments of more importance to us and to immediately release those of much less interest.

We struggled with this program for quite some time as to how it should look, how it should go together and the technology that should be used.

Eventually headquarters accepted the program—liked it, accepted it, got involved in the program—and as a result of that, the technology we have now was applied. We used the bar code labels and technology to identify the products that could be released via line release.

The program was tested in Buffalo and was a resounding success. It is now implemented at all the major border crossings on the Northern and Southern borders.

As a result of its success, line release is now being tested in both Buffalo and Detroit for paperless entry/entry summary, a project requested by the Commissioner.

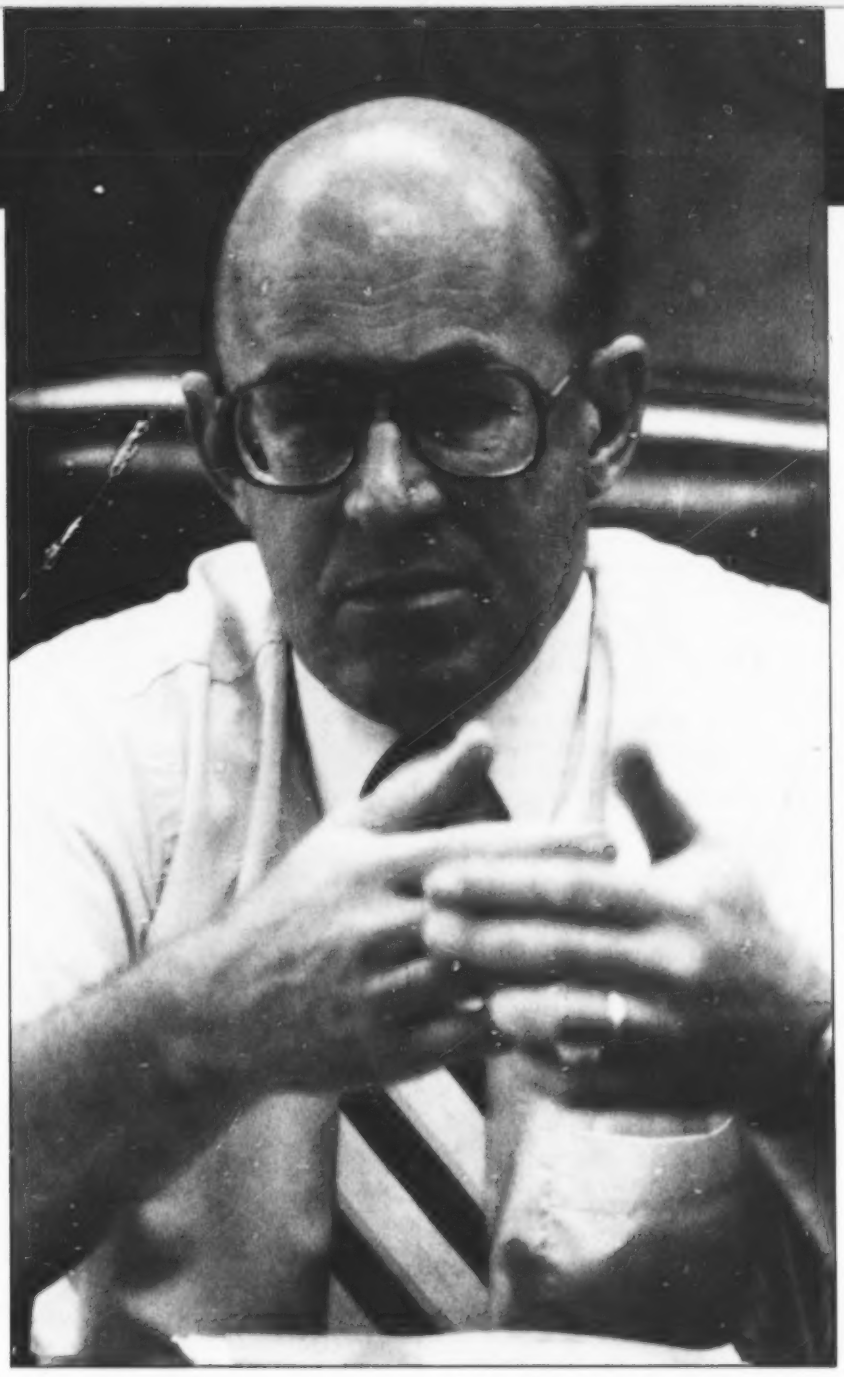
The paperless test has been extended to October of this year and we believe without question that the paperless entry/entry summary will be another smashing success and will also be expanded to the same locations on the Northern and Southern borders that have line release capability.

In a test mode, we are averaging 3,900 paperless entry/entry summaries per month. We have no problems from a Customs standpoint. We have had no problems with the trade.

We have every reason to believe that once the test has been completed it will be implemented nationwide. At that time the number of paperless summaries will escalate dramatically because it will include all points other than Buffalo and Detroit, where the system is being tested.

So we're quite proud of that system. Every day, we're releasing about one-third of the loaded trucks crossing the Lewiston Bridge and Peace Bridge by line release. So they get released at the very first point of contact without further processing except for random samples that we have built in for integrity purposes.

That allows us, with the same amount of manpower, to devote our time more appropriately to the shipments that we have not designated for line release, but have selected for examination.



"ACS module hang-on systems are coming down the road so fast that it's hard to get one up and running well before you have to start working on another," according to Carlton Brainard.

We no longer have to struggle through this entire morass of 3,500-3,700 releases per day, straining to determine which ones warrant our interest.

Carlton (Bill) Brainard is the District Director of Customs in Buffalo.

Operation Winternight

By James Wolford

The ACS selectivity module is an effective enforcement tool.

Using information supplied by every branch within Customs and various outside law enforcement agencies, the Operational Analysis Staffs (OAS) are creating effective ACS enforcement criteria—criteria specifically designed to assist the Customs inspector and Customs agent target suspect shipments and importers.

In an effort to further increase the effectiveness of selectivity by utilizing intelligence data collected by other law enforcement agencies, an OAS unit has been established at the El Paso Intelligence Center (EPIC) operated by the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA).

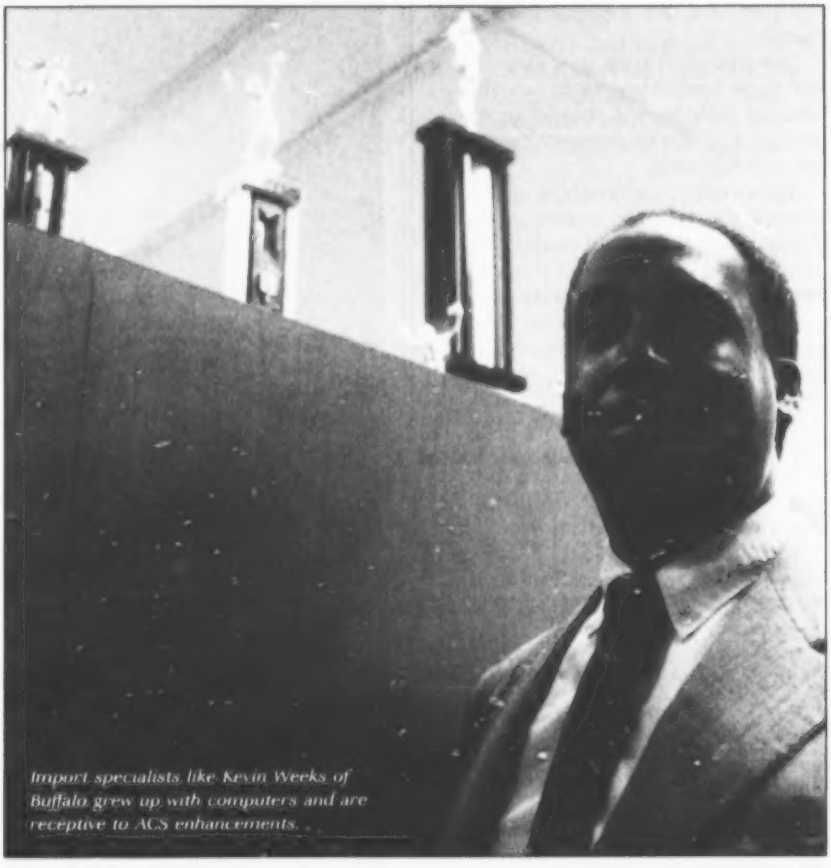
Established as part of Operation Winternight, the task of the EPIC OAS unit is threefold: first, the unit reviews all incoming and outgoing cable traffic to create effective time-sensitive narcotics criteria; second, the unit researches all available databases to identify trends, develop profiles and create selectivity criteria to target shipments that fit those profiles; and third, the unit is in El Paso to acquaint personnel of the other law enforcement agencies represented at EPIC with the capabilities of ACS as an enforcement and research tool.

As one of the two OAS analysts involved in establishing the EPIC unit, I have observed firsthand the program's vast potential. EPIC is operated by DEA. However, nearly every federal law enforcement agency is represented.

The direct access to the databases maintained by these agencies, the EPIC in-house database, and the nearly overwhelming amount of cable traffic from DEA offices worldwide provides the EPIC unit with a vast amount of information.

To illustrate the potential of Operation Winternight, examine the seizure of approximately 450 pounds of cocaine in Miami this past April.

A DEA agent in a source country cabled EPIC to the attention of Winternight. The 24-hour marine watch flagged the cable for the OAS unit, and immediately contacted CET Miami, OE Miami and Miami DEA with the information.



Import specialists like Kevin Weeks of Buffalo grew up with computers and are receptive to ACS enhancements.

EPIC OAS forwarded the raw information immediately to get the initial local selectivity criteria into the system. Further research by the EPIC unit revealed additional information: 1) there was an importer of fresh produce in Miami with the same name as the importer referenced in the DEA cable, however, the address was slightly different; 2) a large number of produce importers were located at the same address as the suspect importer, and one of them had received a shipment of fresh plantains from the suspected shipper; and 3) the second importer was implicated in a large cocaine seizure last year.

This additional information was phoned to Miami OAS to update local criteria and the information previously provided to CET, OE, and DEA.

At that time, the New York OAS unit was also contacted with the information to create national narcotics criteria.

This cooperative effort resulted in the seizure of approximately 450 pounds of cocaine, illustrating the potential of Operation Winternight and the benefits of a cooperative approach to narcotics interdiction using ACS.

James Wolford is an ACS client representative assigned to Charlotte, North Carolina.

JFK Trade Inspector Program: A Simple Solution

Import Manager Silvia Perez of M.G. Maher examines a sweater sample.

By Robert Bass

Like all revolutionary ideas, it was simultaneously simple and complex.

Problem: Too few import specialists and too many entries.

Problem: Too few inspectors and too many examinations.

Solution: Replace quantity with quality. Take the two basic Customs disciplines and combine them. Let each bring their own expertise and see what happens when they actually work together.

What can you add to this mix to improve the results? How about a state-of-the-art computer system to store and correlate data, track results and help in processing and even reducing paper flow. Mix carefully and you have the Day One Trade Inspector Program at JFK.

That's what we started with last January. The mix was a little raw and there were several lumps, but

after nine months, we have a product that all involved can be proud of.

In addition to improved efficiency, you get a bonus. Less equals more. More selective examinations produce more discrepant findings; more quota/visa violations; more trademark/copyright violations; more marking violations and more recovered revenue.

The biggest bonus is that each day there is less of "us and them." Import specialists and inspectors are working together now, better than ever before. Most of the turf problems disappear when you work in the same office.

With traditional divisions beginning to blur, there is a greater sharing of accumulated knowledge and expertise. Inspectors have the advantage of working with the same commodities and to a large extent with the same importers and exporters on a consistent basis. This tends to then highlight the unusual, which improves results.

Import specialists now can get the exact information they desire from an examination. With these two groups working together, sharing information, we can work smarter.

With ACS storing and correlating the vast amount of information on importers, exporters and various commodities, information is readily available for the team to filter through their fields of expertise and come up with solid decisions on which importations should be targeted for examination and which importer-manufacturer combinations should be monitored closely.

The addition of on-site OAS personnel makes it possible to fine tune the system so that it works for us beyond merely gathering information. More suspect merchandise is being examined while low-risk entries are being processed and released without delay.

As new people are added, they will have an opportunity for training, based upon the questions and problems encountered on the job, that was not available to their predecessors. Even now, import specialists are better able to do their work because they now have increased opportunities to go into the field with inspectors. Inspectors are honing their examination skills through better understanding of commercial operations. The two disciplines are still quite distinct, but each has been improved by the interaction and crosstraining that has occurred.

The underlying principle that makes it all work is quite simple. If you do not have the luxury of unlimited time and manpower, you must be selective. You cannot be selective without knowledge and expertise.

With a common pool of knowledge and shared expertise and a system to manage that knowledge, inspectors and import specialists together can do what they could not do separately, and that is to deal successfully with trade in the 20th century.

Robert Bass is currently a senior trade inspector at JFK Airport and was formerly the cargo training coordinator.

Trade Inspector Ed Ortolani (l-r), Import Specialist Lenox Gaskin and Trade Inspector William Ward are sharing information to determine whether a shipment should be examined.

Maryland Port Authority—

Ahead with A

By Chris Hayes

U. S. Customs recently issued an ACS User-Satisfaction Survey to port authorities. With 38 ports responding, Customs drew a variety of conclusions and recommendations.

Top benefits from ACS participation, as reported by port authorities, were "faster cargo clearance, increased port throughput, assistance in marketing, and accurate cargo tracking." No truer statement could be made with respect to the Maryland Port Authority at the Port of Baltimore.

Before our port system, ACROSS, and its interface with ACS, shipments in some cases would take three to four days and longer to clear Customs. Now, the condition has changed to three to four days **before a vessel arrives.**

We have spent a lot of money on ACROSS and the interface with ACS. Our development plan from fiscal years 1984 through 1988 is projected to cost $8.1 million.

We felt originally and still do that these monies spent will be well worthwhile, now, and especially for the future. Just in benefits to the Baltimore user community, we see the payoff. AMS participants can now receive faster clearance notification, even before vessel arrival.

- This eliminates the time lag between release information from Customs to brokers to the steamship line to the terminal operator, which is the normal procedure in the port.
- The electronic networking capability eliminates the extensive telephoning from brokers to carriers and terminal operators.
- For the first time a participant can track the status of cargo throughout the process, never before possible in our port.

This means more business for the Port of Baltimore, more manhours for our labor force and additional revenue for the State of Maryland.

Realizing the advantages of ACROSS and the link with ACS has been a struggle. This is to be expected in any new automated environment. But, the effort was worth it.

Using ACROSS or their own systems, steamship lines can submit manifest data to Customs well in advance of a ship's arrival. Customs can review the manifest data electronically, giving cargo status information at electronic speed to the port system.

This gives the Port of Baltimore great advantages over any nonautomated port, users of ACROSS the edge over those not involved in the linkage, and customers of ACROSS users faster delivery of their imported merchandise.

We are now in a position to provide the advantages of "paperless" electronic processing to all our users and their customers.

interruptions which have occured in the past, according to Dale Boyd, General Manager of the line in Baltimore.

ACROSS has also attracted large importers to the system by providing direct linkages for them to ACROSS for the purposes of cargo tracking and just-in-time inventory support. Universal Marble, an importer and ACROSS client, already is enjoying these benefits.

We are pushing ahead in all phases of the import industry with ACROSS and the ACS link. We are truly ahead of our competition, **and make no mistake about it, we plan to stay there!**

User-Satisfaction Survey Findings

Port Authorities *(n = 38; 18 percent on ABI/AMS; 42 percent non-AMS plan to be, soon).*

- 70 percent of landlord ports and 44 percent of operating ports say AMS gives them a competitive advantage.
- Port authorities anticipate faster cargo clearance (increased port throughput), accurate cargo status information, earlier access to data and increased customer service with ACS.

The electronic linkage (ACROSS-ACS) tying in brokers, steamship lines, terminal operators and inland carriers reduces the cost of operations for the port community and provides increased productivity for all port customers.

In the future, the automated Port of Baltimore will be more useful to its current customers, more attractive to new customers and a more valuable asset to the people of Maryland.

As one of the lead ports or pioneers to get involved in ACS, we have taken the arrows right in the chest. But, like the turtle, "you can't get anywhere without sticking your neck out." The learning curve has been worthwhile and is paying off.

One major steamship line, Hapag-Lloyd, has just made a corporate decision to use ACROSS to interface with ACS, rather than going direct. Integrating the Customs cargo releases with the steamship line's own release system greatly expedites cargo movement and reduces the day to day

The Port of Baltimore is Maryland's largest industry with over 50,000 workers involved in various organizations related to port business.

We plan to serve them well with our aggressive capital improvement program and our partnership with ACS through ACROSS. It is our commitment to our port customers that we will have the space, resources and state-of-the-art technology to meet their needs for the future.

With the advent of the unique bill of lading requirement of all ocean carriers by the end of March 1989, ACROSS and the Port of Baltimore will be able to assist all ocean carriers, automated or not, to reap the advantages of ACS and the port linkages provided by ACROSS.

It's not "automate or perish" for Baltimore, anymore. ACROSS-ACS is our springboard to a much brighter future.

Chris Hayes is the Project Manager for ACROSS, the automated system for the Port of Baltimore.

"ACE is increasing our accuracy. It's increasing our speed. It enables us to process 3,000 collections a day with four cashiers," according to Bob Marusza, Assistant District Director for Commercial Operations in Buffalo.

Department of the Treasury
U.S. Customs Service
Customs Publication #532

THE COMMISSIONER OF CUSTOMS

WASHINGTON, D.C.
ACS-1-CO:A RWE

September 13, 1988

Dear Mr. Anastasi:

This letter recognizes your personal contributions toward achieving the goals of standardizing and automating import procedures for the United States. As a customhouse broker you have set an example for your industry by adopting new methods and data processing to replace cumbersome and costly procedures.

You have been particularly effective as a representative of the National Customs Brokers and Forwarders Association of America in working with your fellow professionals to ensure that the details of major new modules of the Automated Commercial System (ACS) will work in the practical business environment.

Your knowledge of the laws and regulations for import transactions and the procedures used in the trade community have been exceptionally valuable to the Customs Service during the design and development for automated systems. ACH, line release, and statement payment features were processes for which you contributed major design concepts. You also were the first to demonstrate the use of these capabilities. The success of ABI was largely influenced by your early acceptance of electronic transmission.

Your participation with Customs in these efficient and modern procedures are an example of the finest cooperation between government and the private sector. Please accept this golden letter, for your golden contributions.

Yours faithfully,

William von Raab

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